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AUTHOR Rodd, Jillian
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ABSTRACT

When parents have settled outside their country of origin, their child rearing practices may become a mixture of traditional practices, idealized practices from their country of origin, and practices common in the adopted society. This research study investigated similarities and differences in child rearing attitudes and practices of Korean mothers living in urban and rural environments in Korea and Korean mothers living in urban Australia. Subjects were 62 volunteer mothers with at least one child age 3 to 6. A structured interview and the Parent as Teacher Inventory were completed; results revealed that the three groups of mothers held many attitudes in common. These included a preference for authoritarian practices when dealing with some child behavior, as well as a desire to encourage independence and self-reliance. Mothers from Seoul (Korea), unlike those from Kangnam (Korea) and Melbourne (Australia), did not appear to understand or emphasize the importance of play, and they had a wider variety of concerns about their children. Mothers in Melbourne appeared to have developed an appreciation for watching their children develop, which may be related to Australian families' concern and interest in child development. These mothers' understanding and skill in the areas of control and teaching and learning do not appear to be as well-developed as those of the mothers living in Korea, however, perhaps because of isolation from the mothers' native culture and uncertainty regarding expectations about parent-child relationships in Australia. (Contains 14 references.) (EV)

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SOCIALIZATION ATTITUDES AND PRACTICES OF KOREAN MOTHERS OF YOUNG CHILDREN: THE INFLUENCE OF CONTEXT

Jillian Rodd
University of Melbourne
Melbourne, Australia

Introduction

Examination of the socialization of children and parentchild interaction has been the focus of considerable research. Many of the findings point to a startling consistency in the major dimensions of parenting behaviours regardless of cultural origin. However, it is recognised that variations do exist in parents' socialization techniques which are related to cultural expectations about appropriate behaviour (Hamner and Turner, 1990). Mothers of young children are regarded as being particularly knowledgeable about child rearing attitudes and practices specific to their own culture (Whiting and Whiting, 1975)

While the literature generally reports data based on intracultural studies which often differentiates urban and rural families, a paucity of data is available about the child rearing practices used by mothers from cultural groups who are permanently or temporarily living outside their country of origin, for example, Korean mothers who are resident in Australia. These mothers are living in one society with all its values, customs and mores which guide child rearing practices. Yet, they are also living outside that society because presumably they are influenced considerably by the values, expectations, customs and norms of their culture of origin in relation to young children's upbringing. Professionals who work with children and families in their own cultural context and, more specifically when families are resident outside their birthplace, need to be aware of the ramifications of cultural background as it relates to child rearing attitudes and practices.

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Unlike parents who live in their country of origin, parents who have settled elsewhere do not have the same access to traditional normative guidance and support in child rearing (Gfellner, 1990). Bronfenbrenner (1977) argued that family, friends and community supports are important facilitators of successful parenting practices. In the absence of operating guidelines, parents who reside outside their country of origin are likely to attempt to develop their own implicit theory of child rearing which may be influenced by the need to help their children integrate into the new society. Child rearing practices may be a combination of traditional practices, idealised practices from the country of origin and practices common in the adopted society. The potential lack of congruence and dissonance for parents living outside their country of origin may impact upon their child rearing behaviours and result in unexpected variations to traditional patterns.

Research into aspects of child rearing within a specific culture poses a number of challenges for researchers. First, families from specific cultures are not necessarily homogenous, although Korean society is distinguished by homogeneity. Yet, subtle differences can be found to exist in child rearing practices even in homogenous societies. Second, groups of people have different reasons for settling in another country. For example, some groups migrate for political reasons, some for economic reasons, some to escape ethnic sanctions or religious persecution and some to pursue education. Many Korean adults study overseas to obtain qualifications which will improve their economic status. Socio-economic status has been highlighted as a critical factor in parenting practices (McLloyd, 1990). Research evidence suggests that families who are assimilated into and achieve middle class status tend to use child rearing practices similar to those of the middle class of that society. This means that middle class parents who are studying in another country may be affected by exposure to different values and introduce changes to their child rearing practices.

Accelerated social change in most societies has left many parents fearing the erosion of their cultural values, practices and identity, especially if they are resident in another society. However, at the same time, they may feel obliged to support each family member's integration into the changing society. These two pressures can be in conflict for parents who want to give their children opportunities for educational and occupational success without sacrificing alienation from the values, attitudes and customs of the country of origin. Research evidence has revealed that increasing exposure to Western child rearing practices by parents results in departure from traditional practices, with child rearing practices becoming closer to those of the west (Strom and Daniels, 1985). This may be reflected in Korean society which has experienced much change due to the influx of western values and beliefs (Chung, 1993). These factors may be critical to understanding the attitudes and practices which are relinquished and/or adopted by Korean parents in their rearing of children. Contemporary child rearing by Korean mothers may no longer be simply a continuation of traditional ways.

It is important to understand that the study of socialization and parent-child interaction is embed with the researcher's personal, cultural and religious values (Boss, Doherty, LaRossa, Schumm and Steinmetz, 1993). The way in which the research project is framed can be influenced by the researcher's values with respect to the ideas presented, the types of questions asked as well as the way the information from parents is analysed and interpreted. It is important for researchers to be aware of their own influences and biases when framing the research questions, hypotheses and methodologies. This study was conceptualised by an Australian researcher and therefore may reflect personal and cultural biases in the methodology and interpretation of findings.

The purpose of the study was to identify any similarities and differences in child rearing attitudes and practices held by Korean mothers living in urban and rural environments in Korea and Korean mothers living in urban Australia. It was decided to confine the study to mothers of young children because mothers tend to be responsible predominantly for child rearing in most cultures. The decision to select mothers with children between three and six years is related to the concept of 'the age of understanding' (Kelley and Tseng, 1992) which is considered to be achieved by children between the ages of three and six. It is during these years that the indulgent attitudes which parents may hold for children under three years tend to give way to notions of stricter, culturally relevant discipline for children.

Research questions

1. What are the expectations regarding the behaviour of Korean children aged between three and six years held by their mothers?
2. What child rearing techniques and practices are employed by Korean mothers to elicit culturally appropriate and acceptable behaviour from their children?
3. To what extent are traditional cultural values about child rearing reflected in the practices of urban and rural Korean mothers and Korean mothers residing in Australia?

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Method

The subjects

The subjects for this study were sixty two volunteer mothers who had at least one child aged between three and six years. They were recruited by three Korean graduate students in early childhood departments at Yonsei University, Seoul (N=20), Kangnam University, Kangnam (N=23) and the University of Melbourne, Australia (N=19). The mothers' age ranged between 28 and 42 years, (mean = 33.74, sd = 2.8). All were married (self-initiated=62.9 %; arranged =30.6%) and those who are living in Australia had been resident between 15 and 180 months (mean = 62.8 months, sd = 42.9 months). The majority of mothers had two children (64.5 %), with 30.6 % having one child and 4,8 % having three children (mean=1.74, sd = .54). In terms of education, 22.6 % of the mothers had completed secondary school, with 8.1 % having completed post high school level, 56.5 % holding a bachelor's degree and 12.9 % holding a post graduate degree. There was a significant difference between the groups in educational level with the Seoul mothers holding lower educational qualifications than the other mothers ($F(2,59)=7.29$, $p=.001$). While only one of the Seoul mothers was employed, almost all of the Kangnam mothers (91.3 %) were employed. Across the total group, nearly half of the mothers were employed (43.5 %), generally on a fulltime basis (33.9 %) in professional (22.6 %), technical (29.0 %) and managerial (22.6 %) positions.

Instruments

A structured interview conducted in Korean elicited data on biographical details and child rearing attitudes and practices. Parents were presented with a series of common child behavioural incidents and asked to explain how they typically responded to such incidents with their child. Examples of behavioural incidents focused upon attention-seeking, risk taking, aggression, dominance, dependence, conformity, curiosity, non-compliance and conformity. Parents were asked to react to another series of examples which focused upon responses to children's comments about events in the environment. Finally, parents were asked to explain how they taught their children to be obedient, respectful, cooperative and to engage in gender appropriate behaviour, if they valued such behaviours in their children.

To assess parental strengths and needs in child rearing, the participants completed the Parent as a Teacher Inventory (Strom, 1982) which had been translated into Korean by one of the Korean graduate students. This is an attitude scale of 50 items providing information about what parents of 3 to

9 year old children expect of their child, how they interact with their child and what actions they take in response to specific child behaviours. Parental responses can be grouped into five content areas of parental needs: creativity, frustration, control, play and teaching-learning. Reliability and validity information for the instrument is reported by Strom and Daniels (1985) which confirms its appropriateness for use with parents from diverse ethnic and socio-economic groups.

Procedure

Three Korean research assistants completed a structured interview and administered the Parent as a Teacher Inventory in Korean to each mother individually. A letter introducing the study and a consent form translated into Korean were presented to each participating mother. The research assistants interviewed the majority of the mothers in their homes, although a small number of interviews were completed at child care centres before the mother collected her child. Each interview took between 60 and 90 minutes to complete. The data were collated by the Korean graduate student in Melbourne.

Results

The results of this study revealed that the three groups of Korean mothers held many attitudes and expectations in common. However, some significant differences existed between the groups. When asked what aspects of parenting they liked the most, being a parent (37.1 %) and talking and playing with children (17.7 %) were the most common responses for the Seoul and Kangnam mothers. Only the mothers who were living in Melbourne identified watching their child develop (26.3 %) as an aspect that they liked the most. In terms of what they liked least about parenting, the high level of responsibility (27.4 %) and issues of punishment and control (21.0 %) were the least preferred aspects. The Seoul mothers indicated that not having enough time for one's own life (40.0 %) was an issue for them even though the majority were not employed. The skills most needed by parents were considered to be patience (32.3 %) and information (21.0 %), with the Kangnam mothers identifying objectivity (34.8 %) as an important skill.

The majority of mothers (74.2 %) considered character building and the acquisition of appropriate behaviour to be their greatest concerns about their children. However, the Seoul mothers has significantly more concerns about their children ($F(2,59)=3.89$, $p=.02$), raising concern about their children's health as an important issue (45.0 %). This may be a reflection of the nature of the environment with Seoul being a very large urban and polluted

city. The Seoul mothers expressed significantly more concern about their relationship with their children than the other mothers ($F(2,59)=11.83$, $p.05$) The Kangnam mothers reported significantly more aspects of parenting that made them feel guilty than the other mothers ($F(2,59)=4.99$, $p=.009$) and reported being concerned about having their children's love and respect (30.4 %). Given that these mothers were employed, this concern with relationships may reflect the smaller amount of time that they have to spend with their young children.

The mothers expected their children to develop respect for elders (95.5 %), to obey their parents (77.4 %), to cooperate (98.4 %) and to engage in socially desirable behaviour (75.8 %). Those mothers in the highest income group (more than 50,000 won per year) expressed significantly more concern than other mothers ($F(2,59)=4.22$, $p=.004$) about teaching their children socially desirable behaviour. These data support the documented effects of socio-economic status. The Seoul mothers were significantly more concerned than the other mothers about teaching their children cooperative behaviour ($F(2,59)=11.93$, $p<.05$) and teaching about gender expectations ($F(2,59)=10.00$, $p=.0002$).

In response to the presentation of a range of common behavioural incidents, the mothers indicated that they tended to use reprimands and physical restriction as well as suggestions, explanations, encouragement and offers of assistance when responding to their children's inappropriate behaviour. The qualitative responses were classified according to categories generated from the pool of responses expressed by the mothers. These categories were recoded into two broad categories: adult oriented techniques (which included direct commands, reprimands, restrictions, physical and verbal punishments and prohibitive interventions) and child oriented techniques (which included explanations, suggestions, encouragement, offers of assistance or alternatives, positive incentives and supervised activities). No significant differences were found between the three groups of mothers in terms of their use of behaviour management techniques. No significant differences between adult and child oriented techniques were found between the three groups of mothers for behaviours involving attention, risk taking, aggression, dominance, dependence, conformity, curiosity, non-compliance and conformity. These data reveal that Korean mothers utilise a range of techniques but prefer control-oriented, authoritarian practices for responding to inappropriate behaviour from their children.

Early socialisation attitudes, expectations and practices of the sample which were assessed by the Parent as a Teacher Inventory (PAAT) revealed differences between the three groups of mothers. PAAT items are clustered into five areas of parenting which correspond to key socialisation attitudes and practices. Absolute means of 25 for each of the subsets and 125 for the total score distinguish between practices which were considered to be favourable or unfavourable in relation to children's development and learning in Western societies. The instrument has been translated into Korean and used with Korean parents living in America.

Table 1 summarises the overall scores for the total group and for each group. The total mean score of each of the three groups of mothers exceeded the absolute total mean of 125. The total PAAT score of the Seoul mothers was significantly higher than those of the other two groups ($F(2,59)=4.27$, $p<.05$). With the exception of the Control and Teaching Learning scores, the scores for the total group on each of the subsets exceeded the absolute mean of 25. The Seoul mothers scored significantly higher than the other two groups of mothers on the Control subset ($F(2,59)=4.44$, $p<.05$) but significantly lower on the play subset ($F(2,59)=4.37$, $p<.05$). These data suggest that the Korean mothers overall use child rearing techniques which are considered to facilitate children's learning and development according to Western developmental theories. The total group recorded higher mean scores on the creativity and play subsets and recorded the highest mean score on the play subset (27.73).

Table 1. A Comparison of Mothers' Mean PAAT Scores.

PAAT SCORE	Total Group	Korean Mothers Living In Melbourne	Seoul	Kangnam
Creativity	27.02	27.63	27.30	25.26
Frustration	25.35	25.47	27.50	25.04
Control	23.08	23.05	29.30	27.04
Play	27.73	27.58	23.90	25.78
Teaching & Learning	23.11	23.00	28.90	27.52
Total	137.53	137.74	141.75	133.70

Note: Absolute mean for total group is 125 and 25 for each subset.

The mothers from Seoul recorded a total mean score well above the absolute mean (141.75). Their scores on all of the subsets, with the exception of play (23.0), were above the absolute mean. While their overall early socialization attitudes and practices appear to be favourable for facilitating children's learning and development, their understanding of the role of and ways to play could be expanded The mothers who are living in Melbourne scored above the absolute mean on all of the subsets except control (23.05) and teaching and learning (23.00). A significant difference between their understanding and use of control ($F(2,59)=4.44$, $p=.01$) compared to the other mothers was found. Perhaps these mothers' greater reliance on authoritarian techniques is related to the stress and strain of trying to assimilate to a new and often alien culture. Current research evidence points to a relationship between stress and the use of power assertive techniques in child rearing. These mothers could benefit from an increased understanding in the appropriate exertion of control of young children.

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Finally, the Kangnam mothers recorded the lowest total mean score of 133.70 compared to the other groups. However, this score is still above the absolute mean of 125. Unlike the subset scores of the other two groups, all of the Kangnam mothers' subset means are above the absolute mean of 25. Their most favourable scores were recorded for teaching and learning (27.52) and control (27.04). These data suggest that the Kangnam mothers hold a broad understanding about the types of early socialization attitudes which facilitate young children's development and learning.

The creativity scale examines parental support for child fantasy and imagination. It is concerned with parental acceptance and support of child behaviours that promote higher level thinking and imagination. The Korean mothers in this sample tend to encourage their children to ask questions, make guesses, engage in pretending and experiment with problem solving. They were reluctant to express uncertainty in front of their children.

The frustration scale aims to identify disappointments which parents experience as a result of expectations that are inconsistent with children's developmental levels. The items focus upon specific aspects of child rearing that are sources of annoyance for parents. This sample of Korean mothers responded favourably to situations such as tolerating noise, tolerating the disorder of children's play, encouraging children to express their fears and anxieties, dealing with attention-seeking behaviour, joining in with children's activities and being patient in dealing with persistent questions from children.

The control scale deals with the degree of child control preferred by the mothers. The willingness of mothers to share decision making with their child, to permit displays of dominance by the child, to permit the child to disagree with the mother and to permit the child to talk more than adults in family conversations is examined here. The Seoul and Kangnam mothers recorded favourable attitudes and practices in the area of control with the mothers who are living in Melbourne preferring greater adult control of the child.

The play scale investigates mothers understanding of play as an influence on child growth and development. The items examine maternal attitudes to the value of play for boys and girls, understanding of the benefits of play for social, language and cognitive development and the extent to which they understand how rewarding play is for children. The mothers living in Melbourne (27.58) and the Kangnam mothers (25.78) expressed the most favourable attitudes and practices in this area with the Seoul mothers revealing poorer understanding of the value of play in relation to children's development with a mean score below the absolute mean.

The teaching learning scale examines parental attitudes to their own ability to facilitate the child's intellectual development. This items in this scale investigate the mothers' understanding of the value of the pre-school years for children's learning, their capacity to identify conditions that promote learning, to evaluate whether the child has learned a skill, their willingness to offer instruction and to respond appropriately to their child

during play. The Seoul (28.9) and the Kangnam (27.52) mothers scored above the absolute mean in this area indicating favourable attitudes and practices compared to those of the mothers who are living in Melbourne (23.0).

Level of education was significantly negatively correlated with the PAAT subsets of control (rho=-.3374, p=.007) and play (rho=-.3319, p=.008) while the number of children was found to be significantly negatively correlated with the teaching and learning subset (rho=-.3123, p=.013). Concerns about children was found to be significantly correlated with the total PAAT score (rho=.3283, p=.009) and with the aspects that parents liked most about being a parent (rho=.3143, p=.013).

Discussion

The results of this study indicate that Korean mothers of children aged three to six years employed a variety of techniques to respond to their child's behaviour. However, for some specific behaviours, they revealed a preference for authoritarian attitudes and practices which included conformity to parental wishes by the use of direct instruction and commands, and coercion by the use of reprimands and restriction. Nevertheless, while issues of control and obedience were important, the mothers also reported that teaching and encouraging children to be independent and self-reliant were of great concern when interacting with their children in child rearing situations. The mothers were not only control-oriented but were including a child-responsive dimension to their interaction with children. The mothers from Seoul appear to be different to the mothers living in Melbourne and the Kangnam mothers. They generally are not working and hold lower educational qualifications. Their high PAAT score suggests that they employ child rearing practices which tend to facilitate young children's learning and development. However, they do not appear to fully understand the importance of play for young children as do the other mothers. They expressed a greater number and different types of concerns about their children. The mothers living in Melbourne appear to have developed an appreciation for watching their child develop which may be related to Australian families concern and interest in child development. However, their understanding and skill in the areas of control and teaching and learning does not appear to be as well developed as the mothers living in Korea. Perhaps, isolation from their culture and uncertainty regarding expectations about parent-child relationships in Australian society have impacted upon these areas. In spite of some differences, these Korean mothers appear to share some socialization practices which are considered in Australia to promote desirable personality characteristics and socially independent behaviour in children.

The findings of this study have determined some of the early socialization attitudes, expectations and practices which influence child rearing by mothers from Korea. Traditional expectations and values are evident in their responses, particularly in areas of control. Yet, Korean mothers also are regarded as supportive (Yi, 1993) . While many Korean parents report difficulties with parenting (Chung, 1993) and are perceived as strong disciplinarians (Honig and Chung, 1993), the data from this study suggest that at least some parents have acquired and employ appropriate parenting strategies. Early childhood professionals in Korea need to be aware of areas of similarity as well as difference in parental child rearing strategies. The findings also point to parenting issues which early childhood professionals in Australia need to be aware of in their interactions with parents from Korea and in the planning of parent education programs. Some parents may benefit from information about child development and practices which enhance an understanding of the role and means of play, appropriate control and the ways in which parents can teach and facilitate children's learning in the pre school years. Because mothers are children's first and long-term teachers, it is important that they understand the dimensions of their role and develop favourable attitudes and practices as well as realistic and reasonable expectations of children's capabilities.

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